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# 2002-2003 alberta environment department highlights



You must be the change you wish to see in the world. *Mahatma Gandhi*

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## message from the minister

2002-2003 has been a significant year for Alberta Environment. The department has been involved in some of the most important challenges facing our province, and developed innovative and effective solutions that have led the way at the provincial, national and international levels.


This booklet presents some of the highlights of the accomplishments of department staff working in partnership and collaboration with our stakeholders over the past year. Our efforts to develop an Alberta plan for action on climate change and the public consultations around a draft water strategy were huge undertakings in which the department showed its leadership and vision. Although these were perhaps the biggest of the initiatives, there were thousands more completed by department staff.

We will continue the work that needs to be done to sustain a high quality of life for Albertans through the protection and management of water, climate, air, land and waste. There is much that is ongoing, and much that has formed the basis for significant actions in the future. The department will continue its evolution, and continue to build on the foundations that have been laid.

For a brief moment though, we will take the time to celebrate our successes, and look back on our accomplishments, realizing that the work we do now will leave a better place for future generations.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lorne Taylor". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

Lorne Taylor, Ph. D.  
Minister  
Alberta Environment



Alberta Environment is committed to..



## our goal

*Alberta contributes to climate change solutions while maintaining a prosperous economy.*



**Albertans & Climate Change: Taking Action** The province released *Albertans & Climate Change: Taking Action*. This plan is relevant to Alberta and recognizes our unique socio-economic circumstances. It focuses on improving energy efficiency, enhancing how we use technology to control industry emissions, seeking out new environmentally friendly sources of energy, and better managing our emissions today and in the future. Based on wide-ranging consultations with Albertans on a draft plan released in May 2002, and previous work on a science-based climate change strategy developed through consultation, it will act as both a guide and a measuring stick for our actions in the future.  
[www.gov.ab.ca/env/climate/actionplan/index.html](http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/climate/actionplan/index.html)

# taking action on climate change

**Climate Change and Emissions Management Act** Bill 37, the proposed Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, was introduced in the provincial legislature. The Bill provides a legislative framework for how emissions offsets will be applied against Alberta regulatory requirements. It also provides for the establishment of a provincial climate change management fund to help sectors reduce emissions and invest in Alberta energy conservation, energy efficiency and technology. The Bill passed second reading in the Spring session.

**Emissions Trading** The department worked with industry stakeholders to establish the guiding principles for a provincial greenhouse gas reporting program in Alberta through a major feasibility study on the potential for air emissions trading.

## our goal

*Albertans have a safe and sustainable supply of water.*



**Provincial Water Strategy** A draft of *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*, the province's long-term plan to effectively manage the quantity and quality of Alberta's water resources, was released in March. The strategy outlines eight key directions, each supported by a series of strategies and specific actions, and both new initiatives and actions already underway or being enhanced, that will shape the future of water management and decision-making in Alberta. The final strategy will be released this fall.  
[www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca](http://www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca)

**Drinking Water** The department created a new Drinking Water Branch, responsible for developing operator certification programs, providing Albertans with water quality information and ensuring public waterworks systems continue to supply safe drinking water.

# managing our water resources

**Ultra-Violet Irradiation** Alberta became the first province to adopt ultra-violet irradiation as an acceptable technology for disinfecting drinking water, giving treatment facility operators one more option for providing Albertans with safe, secure drinking water.

**Drought Mitigation** Over 1,200 Temporary Diversion Licences were issued to farmers and other stakeholders in need during drought conditions. In addition, department staff conducted a groundwater monitoring program to help understand the effects of severe drought conditions.

**North Red Deer Water Authorization Act** With the North Red Deer Water Users Group, Alberta Environment completed the project review and public consultation that resulted in the *North Red Deer Water Authorization Act*. This special act of the Legislature allows several municipalities to obtain drinking water from the City of Red Deer and contributes significantly to the department's commitment to ensure safe and secure drinking water to Albertans.



## our goal

*Albertans see environmental efforts  
as a collaborative effort.*



**Flaring and Venting Project Team** As part of the Clean Air Strategic Alliance, Alberta Environment worked on the ongoing plans to eliminate flaring and reduce fugitive emissions from the oil and gas sector. This will help companies in the oil and gas industry find economical and creative ways to recover solution gas instead of it being flared or vented. [www.casahome.org](http://www.casahome.org)

**Household Hazardous Waste** Household hazardous waste from 109 roundups in communities across Alberta was safely diverted to the Swan Hills Treatment Centre for proper disposal. Alberta Environment assists the communities with the transfer fees and transport of the hazardous wastes. The program diverted 50,000 litres more than in 2001-2002. [www.gov.ab.ca/env/waste.html](http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/waste.html)

# building partnerships

**Air Monitoring Vehicle** A new emergency Air Monitoring Vehicle for the Calgary region, researched, designed and developed with the City of Calgary, was put into service. The Calgary Fire Department has already used the vehicle to monitor air quality at major incidents to protect the health and safety of emergency personnel, Calgarians and citizens in surrounding areas.

**Joint Agreement for Water Infrastructure** Alberta Environment will share responsibilities for the maintenance of provincially owned water management works and bridges, and the required rehabilitation of the Northern Alberta Erosion Control Program, with Alberta Transportation. This enables Alberta Environment to better maintain the provincially owned water management infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

## our goal

*Albertans are well informed about environmental issues.*



**Alberta River Basins Web Site** Albertans now have online access to water levels, streamflow and precipitation data, flood advisories, water supply outlooks and weather forecaster's comments through the Alberta River Basins Web site. The site received over 180,000 hits last fall from people interested in the high streamflow and flood conditions in southern Alberta. [www.gov.ab.ca/env/water/basins/basinform.cfm](http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/water/basins/basinform.cfm)

**Online Air Quality System** Hourly air quality conditions in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Fort Saskatchewan and Beaverlodge are now available through Alberta Environment's Online Air Quality System. The site is an important source of air quality information for municipalities and regional health authorities. [www.gov.ab.ca/env/air.html](http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/air.html)

# providing timely information

**Information Centre** The Environment and Sustainable Resource Information Centre responded to over 4500 e-mails, handled over 53,000 telephone calls, served over 10,500 walk-in visitors and distributed almost 12,000 publications.

**The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office (FOIP)** Seven hundred and forty eight requests for information were received through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office – up from 559 requests the previous year. In addition, the department's FOIP staff completed the largest FOIP request ever processed by the Alberta government. Over 200,000 pages of records on the Bennett Dam and hydroelectric development on the Peace River were reviewed and more than 19,200 records released this past year.



## our goal

*Albertans are inspired to take actions  
to safeguard the environment.*



**Special Weeks** Special weeks such as Environment Week (June) and Waste Reduction Week (October) continue to educate Albertans about provincial, national and global environmental issues. Environmental education is an important tool to help Albertans understand the environmental issues that affect our province and encourage them to take action.

**Energy Solutions** Alberta Climate Change Central, a private-public partnership funded by Alberta Environment to coordinate and encourage actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, established Energy Solutions Alberta. This one-stop shop for information on energy conservation provides Albertans with information on how to take action on climate change. [www.energysolutionsalta.com](http://www.energysolutionsalta.com)

# educating albertans

**Environmental Education Presentations** More than 800 teachers and future teachers attended environmental education presentations delivered by Alberta Environment Education and Outreach staff at Alberta Teachers' Conventions and Professional Development Days, and at the University of Alberta. Information materials for teachers are also available on the Alberta Environment Web site.

## our goal

*Alberta is a leader in proactive environmental protection.*



**Operation CleanFarm** Operation CleanFarm, a free pesticide disposal program for Alberta farmers, was launched in Northern Alberta and British Columbia and collected and safely disposed of almost 22 tonnes of pesticide. This program is made possible through the contributions of a number of other governments and agricultural organizations.

**Operation Northwind** Alberta Environment and City of Edmonton inspectors visited 120 businesses in northwest Edmonton and issued 42 notices and warnings for infractions such as improper storage of hazardous waste and hazardous recyclables as part of Operation Northwind. In addition, inspections to ensure the proper functioning of air emissions control equipment were conducted at several facilities.

# protecting the environment

**Operation HazVac** Approximately 170 vacuum trucks across the province were inspected to verify compliance with the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act within the liquid waste hauling and disposal sector. This initiative had significant value as an educational opportunity. It helped achieve a higher level of understanding of regulatory obligations in the industry.

**Operation Chinook** As part of an environmental education and inspection program designed to educate businesses on the importance of proper storage and disposal of hazardous waste and recyclables, Alberta Environment inspectors visited 67 businesses in the Pincher Creek and Crowsnest Pass regions of southern Alberta. As a result, 22 companies were issued infraction notices.

**Water Treatment Facilities** Alberta Environment inspected 100 per cent of surface water source drinking water treatment facilities and 50 per cent of all groundwater source drinking water facilities in 2002-2003. The remaining 50 per cent of groundwater source drinking water facilities will be inspected in 2002-2003.



We do not inherit the **earth** from our ancestors, we **borrow** it from  
our **children**. *Native American saying*





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